

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3204

July 19, 2007

The Honorable Robert M. Gates  
Secretary of Defense  
The United States Department of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Suite 319  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On May 22, 2007, I wrote to you to request that you provide the appropriate oversight committees in Congress – including the Senate Armed Services Committee – with briefings on what current contingency plans exist for the future withdrawal of United States forces from Iraq. Alternatively, if no such plans exist, I asked for an explanation for the decision not to engage in such planning.

I am in receipt of a letter from Eric Edelman, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy who wrote that he was responding on your behalf. Under Secretary Edelman's response did not address the issues raised in my letter and instead made spurious arguments to avoid addressing contingency planning for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq.

As I noted in my original letter, "the seeds of many problems that continue to plague our troops and mission in Iraq were planted in the failure to adequately plan for the conflict and properly equip our men and women in uniform. Congress must be sure that we are prepared to withdraw our forces without any unnecessary danger."

Rather than offer to brief the congressional oversight committees on this critical issue, Under Secretary Edelman – writing on your behalf – instead claims that congressional oversight emboldens our enemies. Under Secretary Edelman has his priorities backward. Open and honest debate and congressional oversight strengthens our nation and supports our military. His suggestion to the contrary is outrageous and dangerous. Indeed, you acknowledged the importance of Congress in our Iraq policy at a hearing before the House Armed Services Committee in March, when you stated, "I believe that the debate here on the Hill and the issues that have been raised have been helpful in bringing pressure to bear on the Maliki government and on the Iraqis in knowing that there is a very real limit to American patience in this entire enterprise."

Redeploying out of Iraq will be difficult and requires careful planning. I continue to call on the Bush Administration to immediately provide a redeployment strategy that will keep our brave men and women safe as they leave Iraq – instead of adhering to a political strategy to

attack those who rightfully question their competence and preparedness after years of mistakes and misjudgments.

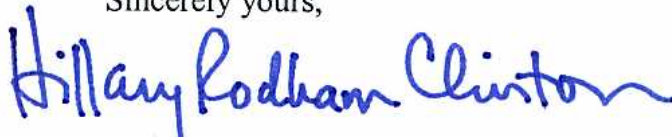
Other members of this Administration have not engaged in political attacks when the prospect of withdrawal planning has been raised. At the June 7 Armed Services Committee confirmation hearing on Lieutenant General Douglas Lute, I asked General Lute "what level of planning has taken place" and "whether the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs have been briefed about the level of planning." I also asked General Lute to determine "what kind of timeline would exist if a decision for either military or political reasons were taken to begin withdrawal" and if he considered this kind of planning to be part of his responsibilities.

General Lute replied, "Thank you Senator. I do think such an adaptation, if the conditions on the ground call for it, will be part of this position."

I renew my request for a briefing, classified if necessary, on current plans for the future withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq or an explanation for the decision not to engage in such planning. I also renew my concern that our troops will be placed in unnecessary danger if the Bush Administration fails to plan for the withdrawal of U.S. Forces. Finally, I request that you describe whether Under Secretary Edelman's letter accurately characterizes your views as Secretary of Defense.

I would appreciate the courtesy of a prompt response directly from you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Hillary Rodham Clinton

CC: General Peter Pace, USMC  
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Admiral Michael Mullen, USN  
Chief of Naval Operations

Lieutenant General Douglas E. Lute, USA  
Assistant to the President and  
Deputy National Security Advisor for Iraq and Afghanistan